

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part V: The Ministry Of The First Local And Universal Church, Acts 3:1-8:3

B. Christ's Work To Embolden His Messengers Before Formidable Foes

(Acts 4:5-31)

I. Introduction

A. When Christ told His followers to disciple the nations, He sent them into a world that was under Satan's control (Matt. 4:8-9; 1 John 5:19; Matt. 28:19-20) to disciple people out of Satan's dominion (Col. 1:13)!

B. That meant we believers **would** face *spiritual opposition*, and Acts 4:5-31 shows us how to handle it:

II. Christ's Work To Embolden His Messengers Before Formidable Foes, Acts 4:5-31.

A. The temple leaders and Sadducees put Peter and John in prison, being upset that they preached in the Name of Jesus, Whom they had crucified, the resurrection, a doctrine the Sadducees opposed, Acts 4:1-3.

B. The next day, the religious rulers of Israel gathered in Jerusalem and called Peter and John before them to ask by what authority they had performed their miracle and taught what they had taught, Acts 4:4-7.

C. Had Peter not been filled with the Holy Spirit, his recollection of Christ's John 21:18-19 prediction that he would be crucified coupled with his having to answer to Israel's leaders who had condemned Christ to death would have intimidated him from taking a good stand, and he might have denied Christ like he did at Jesus' trial, cf. Matthew 26:69-75. However, the Holy Spirit in Peter under the leading of Christ from heaven (cf. John 16:13-14) empowered him boldly to explain his actions and teaching, Acts 4:8-12:

1. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, so he answered the religious leaders directly, Acts 4:8.

2. He noted that if they were examining the Apostles for healing the lame man, all Israel should know that God had healed him by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they crucified, Acts 4:9-10.

3. Peter backed his claim by citing Psalm 118:22; this recalled that the Stone the builders had rejected had become the head of the corner, a citation previously used by Christ to these leaders to show they were rejecting the Messiah, head of the kingdom. Christ simply had Peter use it as He had, Matt. 21:42-46!

4. Peter went further to claim that there was salvation in no other Name than in Jesus Christ, Acts 4:12.

D. The leaders were stunned at the boldness of Peter and John, marveling that they "were not professional scholars or ordained teachers," Acts 4:13a; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., fn. to Acts 4:13.

E. However, they did realize they had been with Jesus, and they relied on that fact to explain their boldness, a wonderful evidence of Christ's control of these men from heaven, and of accountability of Israel's religious leaders to heed their message as the message from the Lord of heaven, Acts 4:13b with 1:1-2!

F. The man who had formerly been lame from birth who had been healed by the Apostles was forty years old, he was standing with them, and the miracle that had been done was viewed by all the people as a work of God, so the leaders could not critique this healing, Acts 3:2; 4:14, 21-22. All the leaders could do was to threaten the Apostles not to speak at all or to teach in the Name of Jesus, Acts 4:15-18, 21-22.

G. Peter and John responded to the leaders' charge, claiming they were obliged to obey God rather than man, to continue their witness regardless of this threat by Israel's religious leaders, Acts 4:19-20.

H. The leaders then threatened them once again to cease their witness, and then let them go, Acts 4:21-22.

I. Once released, the Apostles returned to the Church to report on the warning of the leaders, and of the persecution they were bound to face from them that would tempt them to cease witnessing, Acts 4:23.

J. The Church responded by going to prayer, relying upon Scripture passages for orientation and direction, and thus asking God for boldness to resist the leaders' threat by continuing their witness, Acts 4:24-30.

K. God answered by visibly shaking the place where they met, and giving them great boldness in the Holy Spirit's power to proclaim the Word of the Lord opposite the religious leaders' threats, Acts 2:31.

Lesson: *In facing formidable human and through them spiritual opposition from Israel's religious leaders (cf. John 8:44), Peter and John prayerfully relied on the indwelling Holy Spirit's power and Scripture's direction for the power to remain courageous in their discipling assignment from God.*

Application: *May we similarly prayerfully rely on Scripture's direction and the Holy Spirit's enabling to withstand foes to the ministries that God has assigned us to perform!*